APPENDIX R

OTHER LETTERS RECEIVED DURING THE SCOPING PERIOD ON THE LOS ANGELES-TO-PALMDALE HIGH-SPEED TRAIN PROJECT

SACRAMENTO OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4017
FAX (916) 445-4662

ANTELOPE VALLEY OFFICE
648 W. LANCASTER BLVD., SUITE 101
LANCASTER, CA 93534
TEL (661) 729-6232
FAX (661) 729-1683

VICTOR VALLEY OFFICE
14343 CIVIC DRIVE, FIRST FLOOR
VICTORVILLE, CA 92392
TEL (760) 843-8414
FAX (760) 843-8348

SANTA CLARITA OFFICE
23920 VALENCIA BLVD., SUITE 250
SANTA CLARITA, CA 91355
TEL (661) 286-1471
TEL (661) 286-1472
FAX (661) 286-2543

California State Senate

SENATOR GEORGE RUNNER
REPUBLICAN CAUCUS CHAIR
SEVENTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT

COMMITTEES

HEALTH
VICE CHAIR

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
VICE CHAIR

REVENUE AND TAXATION

TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CALIFORNIA PORTS AND GOODS MOVEMENT

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CALIFORNIA'S MASTER PLAN FOR EDUCATION

April 11, 2007

Dan Leavitt
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Mr. Leavitt,

We are writing to you regarding the proposed high-speed rail line connecting Southern California to the Bay Area, and specifically the segment connecting Los Angeles to Palmdale.

The proposed rail line is estimated to cost tens of billions of dollars. Multiple bond measures to support construction and operation of the project have already been postponed by the Legislature, due to a fear that voters are unwilling to continue adding to the State's dangerously high debt level.

We certainly share these concerns, especially given the recent approval of $40 billion worth of infrastructure bonds, portions of which are already dedicated to transit.

However, while building the entire line from Los Angeles to San Francisco may not be feasible in the immediate future, we believe the Los Angeles-Palmdale segment can attract significant ridership and is therefore a perfect candidate for a public-private partnership.

We would urge the High Speed Rail Authority to consider this innovative approach toward financing this particular stretch of the project.

Sincerely,

George Runner
Senator, 17th District

Sharon Runner
Assemblywoman, 36th District

I MOVED OR RELOCATED TO THE ROSAMOND AREA ABOUT ONE YEAR AGO, AND I WILL BE OUT OF TOWN AT THE TIME OF THESE MEETINGS

AS PER THE ARTICLE ENCLOSED. HOWEVER, I WANTED TO WRITE REGARDING MY SUPPORT OF THE HIGH - SPEED RAIL SYSTEM PROPOSED FOR

THE PALMDALE AREA. BUT, UNLESS YOU CAN GET THE SUPPORT OF THE "CAR" DRIVEN ORIENTED PERSON IN SOME MANNER AND/OR THE LOBBIES

IN GOVERNMENT THE SYSTEM WILL NEVER SUCCEED !!!!! I WAS LOOKING FOR INFORMATION AT THE LANCASTER "METRO LINK" — I FOUND ABOUT 20

PERSONS WAITING AT THE STATION, MANY LOOKING FOR INFORMATION TOO. PLUS, I FOUND LITTLE PARKING FOR MY VEHICLE AT THE STATION, BUT

I WAS NOT IN NEW YORK, PARIS, SAN FRANSCIO, ETC.

AGAIN, I WILL BE OUT OF TOWN BUT I WANTED TO SHOW MY SUPPORT FOR WHATEVER WAY THE VOTE GOES !!!!!!

H.R. NYHOLM

H.R. Nyholm
2010 West Avenue K
#807
Lancaster, CA 93536

time, but
this may
top all

"I think of

daily

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4, 2007

Public comment solicited abou

Apr 23, 2007

Dear Mr. Leavitt,

In the same week of our happiness over the long-awaited opening of Rio de Los Angeles State Park, we receive news that the "California Bullet Train" will be added to the continuing impact of freight and passenger rail traffic on the edge of the park.

I like trains. I like high speed trains, having travelled on them in Europe and Japan. But I will

This one ELSEWHERE.

Existing rail facilities in Fullerton, San Bernardino and Riverside offer viable opportunities to route the high speed train to an area of lesser impact. We should not have to suffer further environmental injustice.

Encl:
Rio de Los Angeles State Park Dedication

Yours truly,

Ann Walnum

Ann Walnum
(Northeast Los Angeles)
765 Crane Blvd.
Los Angeles CA
90065-4038


Rio de Los Angeles State Park
Dedication

Rio de Los Angeles State Park (formerly known as Taylor Yard) is a joint project of the State of California, City of Los Angeles, State Parks Department and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and combines a natural wetlands environment with recreation components.

California Senator Gil Cedillo
California Assemblyman Kevin de León
State Parks Director Ruth Coleman

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa
Los Angeles Councilmember Ed P. Reyes
L.A. City Recreation & Parks, Jon Kirk Mukri

Invite you to
The Dedication of Rio de Los Angeles State Park

Friday, April 20, 2007
3:00 p.m.

1600 North San Fernando Road
Los Angeles, California

RSVP: 213-485-1310 or 213-485-4876 by April 13, 2007

"Pebs Park
Advisory Board" - 2

California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L St. Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA. 95814
Mr. Dan Leavitt
Dear Sir,

I recently read another newspaper article on the proposed High Speed Rail System.

Altho - I don't have any specific inputs except I do believe it would be in the best interest of the people of our state to have this system as soon as possible.

Going to L.A. is really a chore and our valley is expected to continue to grow as predicted.

I just want to say "Go For It".

Sincerely,
R.J. Evans
Lancaster CA

Greater Cypress Park
Neighborhood Council

Land Use and Planning Committee

April 17, 2007

Honorable Ed Reyes
Los Angeles City Council CD1
200 N. Spring Street, Room 410
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Concerns about the High Speed Train

Dear Councilmember Ed Reyes:

The stakeholders in the Greater Cypress Park Neighborhood Council have serious concerns regarding the proposed location of California High-Speed Rail Authority trains connecting Northern and Southern California running along the Los Angeles River in our neighborhood. The timing of this decision is of particular concern due to the recent opening of a California state park at Rio de Los Angeles in former Taylor Yard, Future High School #13, and the future revitalization of the Los Angeles River. In order to have the concerns of the community addressed, we would like to have access to the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) when it is made available so that we can have the opportunity to respond in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Rourk Regan
Chair, Land Use and Planning Committee, Greater Cypress Park Neighborhood Council

CC: State and local government officials

c/o Cypress Park Community Center, 929 Cypress Park Avenue, Los Angeles, Ca., 90065
Telephone:323-276-8522, (DONE) 323-224-2314, FAX: 323-224-2312
Chair: Gustavo Lizarde Co-Chair: Rourk Reagan E-mail: gestalted@adelphia.net

HENRY W. SHAEFFER
INCORPORATED

825 ELYRIA DRIVE
LOS ANGELES, CA 90065
TEL 323.221.9695
CELL 323.646.5845
FAX 323.342.0524

April 18, 2007

Ms Carrie Pourvahidi
Deputy Director
ATTN: Palmdale-Los Angeles
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: High Speed Rail – Union Station to Palmdale Project

Dear Ms Pourvahidi:

On January 6, 2007 at 8:25 a.m., an elderly female motorist was killed when her car was hit by Metrolink Train No. 208 at San Fernando Road and Buena Vista Street in the City of Glendale. "We heard a loud screeching, a loud bang – metal to metal," reported Art Alvarez, 34, who was working at a warehouse along San Fernando Road at the time of the crash. "It sounded like an explosion. People from down the street, over a mile, heard it. It was just terrible." According to transit officials, the accident occurred when the driver managed to maneuver around an at-grade crossing gate into the train's path.

At-grade crossing accidents are not unusual in Los Angeles. In fact, the one noted above occurred three years to the day after an earlier accident at the same crossing. In that incident, a southbound Metrolink train hit a crew-cab pickup truck that had been parked on the tracks in an apparent aborted suicide attempt. The train derailed and smashed into the locomotive of a sidelined freight train. As it jackknifed, it was then hit by an oncoming northbound commuter train. By the time it was over, eleven people had been killed and more than 170 injured.

Most people in Los Angeles remember the accident just mentioned. What is perhaps not so widely known is the actual extent of the at-grade problem. The fact is that of the 18 accidents reported by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority (SCRRA) for Los Angeles County in 2006, virtually all of them involved at-grade crossings. For the record, here are the accidents, verbatim, as reported by SCRRA:

1/6/07	VEHICLE DROVE AROUND GATES AT BUENA VISTA STREET, STOPPED, AND WAS FATALLY STRUCK BY TRAIN 208.

1/12/07	TRAIN 207 STRUCK A SEMI-TRAILER AT A PRIVATE CROSSING (RASMUSSEN AVENUE). MINOR DAMAGE TO TRUCK.
1/13/07	AUTOMOBILE STALLED ON VALLEY VIEW CROSSING. DRIVER ATTEMPTED TO PUSH VEHICLE OFF CROSSING, THEN ABANDONED VEHICLE WHEN TRAIN 608 APPROACHED. VEHICLE STRUCK BY TRAIN 608.
01/24/07	VEHICLE STOPPED ON CROSSING AT BUENA VISTA STREET AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 216. DRIVER IMMEDIATELY FLED SCENE. DRIVER'S AGE AND GENDER ARE UNKNOWN.
03/21/07	VEHICLE STOPPED ON CROSSING AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 803. DRIVER EXITED VEHICLE BEFORE IMPACT.
04/03/07	VEHICLE STOPPED ON CROSSING AT AZUSA AVENUE, BECAME TRAPPED AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 319. 1 FATALITY, AND 2 INJURIES TO OCCUPANTS.
04/26/07	TRAIN 209 STRUCK A FEMALE PEDESTRIAN AT BRAND AVENUE. CONFIRMED SUICIDE.
05/10/07	DRIVER ABANDONED VEHICLE IN GEAR AT GATE. VEHICLE MOVED INTO PATH OF ONCOMING TRAIN AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 321.
06/01/07	TRAIN 211 STRUCK A MALE TRESPASSER AT WOLFSKILL AVENUE. CONFIRMED SUICIDE.
06/12/07	VEHICLE DROVE AROUND GATES AT AVENUE J AND CLIPPED REAR OF TRAIN 216. DRIVER FLED SCENE.
07/19/07	DRIVER DROVE AROUND/THROUGH GATES AND STRUCK TRAIN 405 AT JURUPA AVENUE. CONFIRMED SUICIDE.
07/28/07	DRIVER DROVE AROUND/THROUGH GATES AT CLAY STREET AND WAS FATALLY STRUCK BY TRAIN 411.
08/10/07	TRAIN 686 STRUCK A WHITE TRUCK THAT WAS PARTIALLY ON THE TRACK. DRIVER FLED SCENE.
08/22/07	REAR OF FLATBED TRACTOR TRAILER WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 208 AT AVENUE "M" IN LANCASTER. DRIVER THOUGHT HE'D CLEARED CROSSING.
09/12/07	DRIVER ENTERED GRADE CROSSING AT ARROW HIGHWAY AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 323.
12/01/07	VEHICLE STOPPED ON CROSSING AT MAGNOLIA STREET AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 802.
12/23/07	JOGGER WEARING HEAD PHONES RAN IN FRONT OF TRAIN 359 AT BONNIE COVE AND WAS FATALLY INJURED.
12/28/07	DRIVER STOPPED ON CROSSING AND WAS STRUCK BY TRAIN 220.

Construction of a high-speed rail line from Union Station to Palmdale will no doubt have numerous environmental impacts, related both to its construction and its operation, and I have every confidence the High Speed Rail Authority will be receiving considerable input in that regard. It seems to me, however, that if the existing Metrolink tracks can be grade separated along with the new high speed tracks, construction of the new line may actually be able to mitigate a highly dangerous environmental situation we currently have with at-grade rail operations in densely populated urban areas here in the County of Los Angeles.

One further comment. On April 20, 2007, the new 40-acre Rio de Los Angeles State Park will be dedicated on the site of the old Taylor Yards along San Fernando Road in the City of Los Angeles. The park will feature soccer fields, baseball diamonds and many badly needed acres of open space. The park has only one problem. It is separated from the soon-to-be-revitalized Los Angeles River by Metrolink tracks and the vestiges of the old Taylor Yards. Again, I see an opportunity. Why not reduce the width of the right-of-way at this point and grade separate the right of way from the park? A combination of landscaped berms and trenched and capped tracks could provide links from the park to the river that probably could not be provided any other way. (Screens – perhaps covered by vines – could be installed over open portions of the below-grade tracks to prevent accidents and malicious mischief.) I feel if the solution is well designed and well presented, it could be a real win-win for California and the local community.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the scoping of the EIS/EIR, and would be happy to discuss these comments further at an appropriate point in the future. As I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Mt. Washington Association, I must add the disclaimer that the comments in this letter are my own, and do not necessarily express the position of the Board or the Association.

Sincerely,

Henry W. Shaeffer, Esq.

cc Hon. Ed Reyes, Councilmember 1st District
Hon. José Huizar, Councilmember 14th District
David R. Solow, Chief Executive Officer, SCRRA
Board of Directors, SCRRA
Natalie Seaman, President, Mt. Washington Assn.

Mt. Washington Association

The Mt. Washington Homeowners Association supports the addition of rail mass transit and high speed rail line would be a tremendous asset to the City of Los Angeles.

The rail yards that have been converted to parks at the Tailor Yard and the Cornfield will erode the physical barriers to the Los Angeles River. It is possible with these parks to reconnect people to the organic resource of the Los Angeles River. The Los Angeles River canalization itself has been a tremendous barrier to the citizens of Los Angeles to the enjoyment of the river.

It is imperative that the existing rail lines and the possible high speed rail lines have a grade separation from these parks. The park could be built over the rail lies and prevent the enormous environmental impacts of the proposed high speed rail lines.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Herron Architect

Land Use Chair Mt. Washington Association

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

United States Coast Guard

Commander
District Eleven

U.S. Coast Guard Island, Bldg 50-2
Alameda, CA 94501-5100
Staff Symbol: (dpw)
Phone: (510) 437-3514
Fax: (510) 437-5836

16590
March 15, 2007

California High Speed Rail Authority
Palmdale - Los Angeles
Attn: Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director
925 L Street, STE 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

Please include the Coast Guard Bridge Office concerning the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the section of the California High Speed Rail Authority's proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) System, from the City of Palmdale to the City of Los Angeles, for all bridge related issues over existing or proposed navigable waters of the United States.

The General Bridge Act of 1946 requires that the location and plans for bridges over navigable waters of the United States be approved by the Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard prior to commencing construction.

Coast Guard Bridge permitting is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Coast Guard should be invited to participate as a cooperating agency for NEPA, during the development of the draft environmental document for the project.

Applications for bridge permits should be addressed to Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District, Bridge Section, Bldg 50-2, Coast Guard Island, Alameda, CA 94501. Applications are available on-line at: http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-o/g-opt/g-opt.htm. The application must be supported by sufficient information to permit a thorough assessment of the impact of the bridges and their immediate approaches on navigation and the environment. We recommend discussing the proposed impacts of procedures for constructing, altering or demolishing bridges, in the NEPA document. The NEPA document should also contain data on the number, size and types of vessels using or projected to use the waterway.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the project in this early stage. You may contact Mr. Carl Hausner by telephone at (510) 437-3515 if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

DAVID H. SULOUFF
Chief, Bridge Section
Eleventh Coast Guard District
By direction the District Commander

Copy: USACE, Los Angeles

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

April 25, 2007

David Valenstein
Federal Railroad Administration
1120 Vermont Avenue, NW, MS 20
Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: EPA Scoping Comments for the Los Angeles to Palmdale California High Speed Train Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Federal Register Notice published on March 15, 2007, requesting comments on the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) decision to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the Los Angeles to Palmdale California High Speed Train. Our comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our detailed comments are enclosed.

We appreciate the close working relationship we have had with FRA and CHSRA as a cooperating agency on the previously completed statewide, programmatic, "Tier 1" EIS completed for a high speed train for California. We understand that the proposed project, connecting Los Angeles to Palmdale via high speed train, will be one of the first project-level, "Tier 2" EISs to be initiated as a follow-up to the statewide analysis. EPA supports the concept of a high speed train system in California that can provide an alternative to increasing vehicle miles traveled and lead to reduced environmental impacts if planned well. We look forward to continuing our working relationship with you on this Tier 2 EIS and other Tier 2 project-level environmental analyses that will follow.

Through our previous comments on the statewide, programmatic EIS, EPA provided multiple recommendations and concerns to be addressed at the Tier 2 level. The attached comments include these, and other recommendations, related to continued interagency coordination and analysis of impacts to (1) water resources, (2) Soledad Canyon and Santa Clara River, (3) biological resources and wildlife movement corridors, (4) air quality, (5) noise, (6) tunneling, and (7) cumulative impacts and growth inducement analysis.

We look forward to maintaining our working relationship with FRA and CHSRA as we continue to coordinate on this important project. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Connell Dunning, the lead EPA reviewers for this project. Connell can be reached at Dunning.Connell@epa.gov or (415) 947-4161.

Sincerely,

Nova Blazej, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Enclosures: EPA's Detailed Comments

cc: Dan Leavitt, California High Speed Rail Authority
Mark Cohen, Army Corps of Engineers
Kurt Roblek, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Maiser Khaled, Federal Highway Administration
David Bunn, California Department of Fish and Game

EPA SCOPING COMMENTS FOR THE LOS ANGELES TO PALMDALE TIER 2 HIGH SPEED TRAIN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, APRIL 25, 2007

Interagency Coordination

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) commends the previous efforts of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) in coordinating with our agency to highlight the potential environmental impacts of a high speed train system for all of California as outlined in our April 2003 Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU outlined a process for integrating the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 to streamline the environmental review process for the statewide "Tier 1" Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), which is now completed

We understand that the proposed project, connecting Los Angeles to Palmdale via high speed train, will be one of the first project-level, "Tier 2" EISs to be initiated as a follow-up to the statewide analysis. For this, and all upcoming project-level EISs that tier off of the statewide programmatic document, EPA is available to continue to coordinate to discuss potential environmental concerns and solutions at the earliest possible opportunity.

Water Resources

The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (Guidelines) at 40 CFR Part 230.10(a) state that ". . .no discharge of dredged or fill material shall be permitted if there is a practicable alternative to the proposed discharge which would have less adverse impact on the aquatic ecosystem, so long as the alternative does not have other significant adverse environmental consequences." While EPA has concurred that the high speed train alternative alignment identified in the completed statewide Tier 1 PEIS for the Los Angeles to Palmdale section of the project is "most likely to contain" the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative (LEDPA), FRA and CHSRA will have to demonstrate in the EIS for this project that potential impacts to waters of the United States have been avoided and minimized to the maximum extent practicable prior to obtaining a CWA Section 404 permit (40 CFR 230.10(a) and 230.10(d)).

Recommendations:

- In this Tier 2 Draft EIS for the Los Angeles to Palmdale high speed train, follow through with commitments made in the statewide Tier 1 Final PEIS, specifically "Avoidance and minimization measures would be incorporated into the development, design, and implementation phases at project-level environmental analysis. In addition, close coordination will occur with the regulatory agencies to develop specific design and construction standards for stream crossings, infrastructure setbacks, monitoring during construction, and other best management practices" (Final PEIS, Page 3.17-13).

- Demonstrate that all potential impacts to waters of the United States have been avoided and minimized. If these resources cannot be avoided, the Draft EIS

analyses should clearly demonstrate how cost, logistical, or technological constraints preclude avoidance and minimization of impacts.

- Identify design measures and modifications to avoid and minimize impacts to water resources. Quantify the benefits achieved for each alternative studied, for example, number of stream crossings avoided, acres of waters of the United States avoided, etc.

- Identify all protected resources with special designations and all special aquatic sites and waters within state, local, and federal protected lands. Additional steps should be taken to avoid and minimize impacts to these areas.

Biological Resources

Soledad Canyon

EPA has concerns that a SR-58/Soledad Canyon route paralleling the Santa Clara River and using cut-and-fill techniques in this sensitive region will cause significant damage to the Soledad Canyon area and this major regional resource for wildlife. Soledad Canyon contains the uppermost reaches of the main stem to the Santa Clara River and the surrounding watershed contains many of the Santa Clara's headwater streams. The Santa Clara River is the largest river in Southern California and one of the last major rivers in the region that exists in a relatively natural state. While portions of the upper Santa Clara River have perennial flows, most of the upper watershed is dry in the absence of storms. As one of the last free flowing natural riparian systems left in southern California, the Santa Clara River supports a diversity of aquatic, semi-aquatic, and terrestrial organisms. The upper watershed and headwater streams in the planning area are largely intact, providing breeding sites, traveling routes, and other resources for wildlife; natural flood control; recharge of groundwater basins; nutrient cycling; and helping to sustain the river and estuary downstream. Maintaining and restoring watershed integrity and habitat connectivity in this aquatic and terrestrial system is essential to sustaining the flow of organisms and processes across the landscape.

Soledad Canyon also contains high-quality riparian and aquatic habitat including a reach of the upper Santa Clara River that is designated as critical habitat for the federally and state listed unarmored threespine stickleback fish. Historically, the unarmored threespine stickleback was found throughout Southern California, but by 1985 it only remained in a small portion of the upper Santa Clara River drainage (Soledad Canyon) in Los Angeles County and the San Antonio Creek drainage in Santa Barbara County. The decline of the stickleback is attributed to urbanization in the Los Angeles area. Today, the unarmored threespine stickleback still faces many threats including urban development, pollution, mining, predation by non-native species, water quality degradation, and channelization of streams. Santa Ana suckers, southwestern willow flycatchers, and summer tanagers also occur in this area. The riparian habitat along the 100-mile long Santa Clara is significant ecologically because it serves as "stepping stones" for migratory birds traveling between riparian areas and wetlands on the south coast.

Due to the potentially significant impacts that may affect the Santa Clara River and Soledad Canyon resource area, including significant degradation of waters of the United States

(40 CFR 230.10(c)), the proposed alignment may not be consistent with the CWA Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230.10 (a) and (c)). The statewide Tier 1 Final PEIS indicated that a wider corridor, including a route that would avoid Soledad Canyon and the Santa Clara River, will also be considered at the project level.

Recommendations:

- As committed to in the statewide Tier 1 Final PEIS, this Draft EIS should fully analyze an alternative that will connect Bakersfield to Los Angeles through the Antelope Valley, will avoid impacts to the Santa Clara River and Soledad Canyon habitat corridor and wildlife resources, and will not degrade existing and proposed conservation areas.

- Identify avoidance and minimization measures for each alternative analyzed, and quantify the specific resources avoided, for example, acres of habitat avoided, linear feet of stream avoided, number of stream crossings minimized, etc.

San Gabriel-Castaic Linkage

In addition to containing the biologically important upper Santa Clara River, Soledad Canyon cuts transversely across the San Gabriel-Castaic Habitat Linkage. The San Gabriel-Castaic Linkage is a major wildlife corridor that connects the Castaic Ranges to the San Gabriel Mountains, both part of the Angeles National Forest, managed by the U.S Forest Service.

The South Coast Missing Linkages project is a highly collaborative effort among federal and state agencies and nongovernmental organizations to identify and conserve landscape-level habitat linkages to protect essential biological and ecological processes in the South Coast ecoregion. The San Gabriel-Castaic Linkage is one of 15 landscape linkages in the ecoregion identified by the South Coast Missing Linkages Project as irreplaceable and imminently threatened. Planning for this linkage was completed in 2004, and the group is continuing to work by protecting specific parcels within the linkage.

The habitat linkage encompasses a unique ecological transition zone between coastal and desert habitats. Coastal sage scrub and chaparral covers the hillsides in the western part of the planning area, with dense coast live oak woodlands in canyons and high quality riparian scrub and woodlands at lower elevations. The easternmost part of the linkage has a strong desert influence; dominated by desert scrub, with juniper and Joshua tree woodlands. A number of sensitive natural communities occur in the planning area including alluvial fan sage scrub, southern cottonwood willow riparian forest, southern riparian scrub, southern sycamore alder riparian, freshwater marsh, coast live oak riparian forest, vernal pool, mainland holly-leaved cherry woodland, valley needlegrass grassland, and coastal sage scrub. These habitats are among the rarest and most sensitive ecosystem types in the United States.

EPA agrees with the FRA and CHSRA conclusion provided in the statewide Tier 1 Final PEIS, that "wildlife movement corridors may be affected where the high speed train alignment would not be in an existing rail or highway corridor and would traverse natural area... or where

there is habitat use in existing rights-of-way where wildlife movement occurs across roads and rail lines where fences are not obstructing movement" (Final PEIS, Page 3.17-13).

EPA is supportive of FRA and CHSRA commitments in the statewide Tier 1 PEIS that "project-level studies will identify areas where it is important to maintain connectivity and will ensure that sufficient mitigation is included to maintain movement corridors," and "wildlife underpasses or overpasses will be added to the (high speed train) at-grade alignments, where appropriate, to reduce the overall effects on wildlife corridors and movements" (Final PEIS Appendix 2, Chapter 9, Standard Response 3.15.9).

Recommendations:

- Incorporate information developed for the Missing Linkages Report and identify how alternatives have been designed to allow for continued wildlife movement:
  California Missing Linkages Report:
  http://scwildlands.org/missinglinks/reports/download_missinglinkages.htm
  South Coast Missing Linkages Project: A Linkage Design for the San Gabriel-Castaic Connection, South Coast Wildlands, March 2004:
  http://www.scwildlands.org/reports/SCML_SanGabriel_Castaic.pdf

- In the Draft EIS, identify how alternatives will be consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the Santa Clara River upper Watershed Protection Plan. This plan builds on the partnership that coalesced around the need to protect the San-Gabriel-Castaic linkage and was completed by the Nature Conservancy (TNC) in fall 2006 for the upper watershed with the help of 30 stakeholders. The conservation plan highlights the ecological assets, or conservation targets, of the upper watershed. The plan identifies strategies that can be undertaken by partners and stakeholders of the watershed to enhance the viability of conservation targets as well as to abate the threats to them.
  http://www.santaclarariverparkway.org/wkb/scrbiblio/tnc2006

- Use data developed for the statewide California Wildlife Action Plan (CWAP) to inform the siting of alternatives and mitigation ideas. Identify in the Draft EIS the specific design changes proposed to avoid resources. The CWAP addresses 800 at-risk species and provides range maps. The range maps for these species are available from the California Department of Fish and Game.
  http://www.dfg.ca.gov/habitats/WDP/

- In addition to locating the available data indicating where species ranges may be bisected by the high speed train system, EPA recommends that FRA and CHSRA facilitate a meeting of scientists and local experts to explore the specific locations and design features for wildlife crossings that are needed.

- Identify the connections that would likely remain after construction of the high speed train system and highlight these areas as "connectivity zones" for protection and preservation. In the Draft EIS, identify specific commitments for

preservation of these corridors through mitigation measures and cooperative agreements.

- Disclose how fencing the train route will affect wildlife movement and discuss how fencing for safety purposes will be integrated with proposed wildlife passages, such as culverts, bridges, viaducts, underpasses, and overpasses.

Upper Santa Clara Biodiversity Working Group

The California Coastal Conservancy leads an informal coalition of agency personnel working to plan and protect the biodiversity and wildlife corridors within the Upper Santa Clara Watershed. The group has been working on establishing a community organization to promote open space and biodiversity conservation in the upper watershed.

Recommendation:

EPA recommends that FRA and CHSRA coordinate with local habitat experts, including TNC, Coastal Conservancy, and the Upper Santa Clara Biodiversity Working Group, to insure that the Draft EIS analyzed for connecting Los Angeles to Palmdale includes a discussion of the open space and biodiversity protection measures identified and a commitment to incorporate specific goals and objectives where feasible. Please contact Bob Thiel, California Coastal Conservancy, Santa Barbara (805-957-9299) to get more information about this group.

Air Quality

The proposed project passes through in the South Coast Air Basin (SCAB). The SCAQMD implements local air quality regulations in the SCAB to carry out Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) requirements, as authorized by the EPA. The current SCAB nonattainment designations under the Federal CAA are as follows: carbon monoxide (CO) - serious nonattainment; 8-hour ozone - severe nonattainment; particulate matter with a diameter of 10 microns or less (PM10) - serious nonattainment; and particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 microns or less (PM2.5) - nonattainment. The SCAB has the worst 8-hour ozone and PM2.5 problems in the nation, and attainment of these National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) will require massive reductions from mobile sources, given the rapid growth in this emissions category and the long lifespan of diesel engines.

General Conformity and Transportation Conformity

The proposed project may require a general conformity determination by FRA. If required, the Draft EIS should include the general conformity determination with related mitigation commitments. FRA and CHSRA should work with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) to ensure that anticipated emissions from the proposed project are consistent with the Air Quality Management Plan.

To the extent that the proposed trains system will require modification of the existing road network and construction of parking lots and transit facilities, the Draft EIS should identify what elements of this project will require funding or approval by the Federal Highway

Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA). In addition, the Draft EIS should demonstrate that FHWA or FTA -funded or -approved project elements are included in a conforming transportation plan and a transportation improvement program. FRA and CHSRA should work with SCAQMD and Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to ensure that applicable elements of the proposed project are consistent with future revisions of the RTP. The identification of sensitive receptors, and carbon monoxide and particulate matter hotspot analyses should be included in the Draft EIS, especially where parking lots and road modifications are proposed.

Particulate Matter (PM) Standards

On October 17, 2006, EPA issued a final rule establishing changes to the PM2.5 and PM10 NAAQS, which was effective on December 18, 2006 (See 71 FR 61144). In this final rule, a new 24-hour standard for PM2.5 of 35 micrograms per cubic meter (ug/m3) replaces the old standard of 65 ug/m3, and the annual PM10 standard of 50 ug/m3 has been revoked. The PM10 24-hour standard of 150 ug/m3 has been retained. Conformity requirements for the new 24-hour PM2.5 standard of 35 ug/m3 do not apply until one year after the effective date of nonattainment designations. EPA notes that the PM2.5 hot-spot analyses required for the project-level conformity determination must still consider the 1997 PM2.5 standards, because these are the standards upon which the existing PM2.5 nonattainment designations were based.

Particulate Matter Hotspot Analysis

The DRAFT EIS should include a discussion of the PM10 requirements, including reflection of the changes to PM10 project-level hotspot procedures established in EPA's March 10, 2006 final revisions to the transportation conformity rule (see 71 FR 12468) or EPA's March 2006 guidance document on PM hotspots (http://www.epa.gov/otaq/stateresources/transconf/policy/420b06902.pdf.). The March 10, 2006 changes to EPA's conformity rule supersede all previous FHWA and Caltrans PM hotspot guidance documents (i.e., "Interim PM10 Guidance," M. Brady, D. Eisinger, T. Kear. February, 2000; "Guidance for Qualitative Project-Level 'Hot Spot' Analysis in PM10 Nonattainment and Maintenance Areas", FHWA, September 12, 2001; and "Particulate Matter and Transportation Projects, Analysis Protocol", February 23, 2005.).

Recommendation:

- Where applicable, insure the PM10 project-level hotspot analysis is performed following the March 2006 procedures and that the analysis reflects the changes of the procedures. EPA's March 2006 guidance document on PM hotspots discusses the methods that can be used for performing qualitative PM2.5 and PM10 hotspot analyses, including comparisons to other locations. In particular, the guidance recommends considering PM10 and PM2.5 conditions at nearby monitors, or locations similar to the proposed project.

Construction Mitigation Measures

The Draft EIS should include SCAQMD requirements to reduce emissions. In addition to these measures, EPA recommends the following additional measures to reduce the impacts resulting from future construction associated with this project.

Recommendations:

Due to the serious nature of the PM10 and PM2.5 conditions in the project area, EPA recommends that the best available control measures (BACM) for these pollutants be implemented at all times and that the Draft EIS, FEIS, and Record of Decision (ROD) incorporate a Construction Mitigation Plan. We recommend that (1) all applicable requirements under SCAQMD Rules, and (2) the following additional and/or revised measures be incorporated into a Construction Mitigation Plan.

Fugitive Dust Source Controls:

- Stabilize open storage piles and disturbed areas by covering and/or applying water or chemical/organic dust palliative where appropriate. This applies to both inactive and active sites, during workdays, weekends, holidays, and windy conditions.
- Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate, and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions.
- When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.

Mobile and Stationary Source Controls:

- Reduce use, trips, and unnecessary idling from heavy equipment.
- Maintain and tune engines per manufacturer's specifications to perform at EPA certification levels and to perform at verified standards applicable to retrofit technologies. Employ periodic, unscheduled inspections to limit unnecessary idling and to ensure that construction equipment is properly maintained, tuned, and modified consistent with established specifications.
- Prohibit any tampering with engines and require continuing adherence to manufacturers recommendations
- Lease newer and cleaner equipment meeting the most stringent of applicable Federal or State Standards. In general, only Tier 2 or newer engines should be employed in the construction phase, given the scale of the construction project, the level of the exposed population, and the high background levels of pollutants in the area.
- Utilize EPA-registered particulate traps and other appropriate controls where suitable to reduce emissions of diesel particulate matter and other pollutants at the construction site.

Administrative controls:

- Identify all commitments to reduce construction emissions and update the air quality analysis to reflect additional air quality improvements that would result from adopting specific air quality measures.
- Identify where implementation of mitigation measures is rejected based on economic infeasibility.

- Prepare an inventory of all equipment prior to construction and identify the suitability of add-on emission controls for each piece of equipment before groundbreaking. (Suitability of control devices is based on: whether there is reduced normal availability of the construction equipment due to increased downtime and/or power output, whether there may be significant damage caused to the construction equipment engine, or whether there may be a significant risk to nearby workers or the public.)
- Utilize cleanest available fuel engines in construction equipment and identify opportunities for electrification. Use low sulfur fuel (diesel with 15 parts per million or less) in engines where alternative fuels such as biodiesel and natural gas are not possible.
- Develop a construction traffic and parking management plan that minimizes traffic interference and maintain traffic flow.
- Identify sensitive receptors in the project area, such as children, elderly, and infirm, and specify the means by which you will minimize impacts to these populations. For example, locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors away from fresh air intakes to buildings and air conditioners.
- Given the severity of the PM problem in the area and the size of the construction activity associated with the proposed project, commit to implement during all construction phases more than the minimum of one BACM in each category in order to reduce PM emissions to the minimum,
- Locate construction equipment and staging zones away from sensitive receptors such as children and the elderly as well as away from fresh air intakes to buildings and air conditioners,

Noise Impacts

The Draft EIS should address the potential noise and vibration impact to residents, businesses, and wildlife related to the construction and operation of the proposed project. Potential impacts to human health and welfare and wildlife activity are important with a project of this magnitude, particularly in light of the maximum speed and resulting sounds and vibrations that the high speed train will produce throughout the train route.

Recommendations:

All noise impacts to should be fully analyzed and presented in the Draft EIS. In addition, the Draft EIS should include commitments to implement measures to adequately mitigate noise impacts associated with the project. The Draft EIS should assess noise and vibration exposure to determine high, medium, and low severity of impacts near the proposed high speed train route. The Draft EIS should address nocturnal and diurnal impacts to wildlife activities such as foraging, predator avoidance, and nesting that may be affected by new sounds and vibrations introduced to natural habitats.

Methods to incorporate effective public participation into the NEPA process should be fully described and implemented early to better incorporate public concerns into the

planning process. Where potential acquisition of property is proposed, an open, participatory process involving affected residents should be implemented.

Tunneling Methodology and Impacts

The Draft EIS should identify the amount of material to be removed per mile of tunnel and where material will be disposed or stored. Any impacts associated with the transport and storage of fill should be described and mitigated. Discuss the tunneling methodology to be utilized and the corresponding environmental impacts. Identify specific design measures and options to insure that the full scope of environmental impacts associated with tunneling are considered in project design.

Recommendations:

- Discuss the methodology proposed for tunneling associated with the high speed train system alternative, including equipment and planned locations for staging tunnel operations and methods for transportation of tunnel equipment.

- Estimate the miles of roads required for operation and access for emergency personnel in tunneled areas and the number of temporary roads required for each mile of tunnel construction. Include proposed methods for removal and revegetation of these roads.

- Quantify the environmental impacts associated with the tunneling and required connected actions, for example amount of material removed per mile tunnel, impacts associated with storage of removed material, road access required, impacts associate with the transport of removed material, etc.

- Discuss the potential impacts of tunneling on the maintenance of stream flows. Address the potential for tunneling to affect riparian habitat, the direction of lateral movement of water through the soil profile, and the recharge of shallow, unconfined aquifers.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Cumulative impacts are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA regulations as the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such actions (40 CFR 1508.7). The cumulative impacts analysis should provide the context for understanding the magnitude of the impacts of the alternatives by analyzing the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects or actions and then considering those cumulative impacts in their entirety. These actions include both transportation and non-transportation activities. Where adverse cumulative impacts are identified, the Draft EIS should disclose the parties that would be responsible for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating those adverse impacts (CEQ's Forty Most Frequently Asked Questions #19).

Recommendations:

- The cumulative impact analysis should consider non-transportation projects such as large-scale developments and approved urban planning projects that are reasonably foreseeable and are identified within city and county planning documents.

- The cumulative impact analysis should describe the "identifiable present effects" to various resources attributed to past actions. The purpose of considering past actions is to determine the current health of resources. This information forms the baseline for assessing potential cumulative impacts and can be used to develop cooperative strategies for resources protection (CEQ's Forty Most Frequently Asked Questions #19). Identify the current condition of the resource as a measure of past impacts. For example, the percentage of wetlands lost to date.

- Identify the future condition of the resource based on an analysis of the cumulative impacts of reasonably foreseeable projects or actions added to existing conditions and current trends. Identify the trend in the condition of the resource as a measure of present impacts. For example, the health of the resource is improving, declining, or stasis.

- The cumulative impact analysis should identify potential large, landscape-level statewide and regional impacts, as well as potential large-scale mitigation measures. The analysis should examine landscape-level impacts to all sensitive resources on a statewide and regional scale. The cumulative impact analysis should guide future project-level analyses and potential avoidance and minimization measures, while focusing design and mitigation efforts. Disclose the parties that would be responsible for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating those adverse impacts.

- Assess the cumulative impacts contribution of the proposed alternatives to the long-term health of the resource, and provide a specific measure for the projected impact from the proposed alternatives.

- EPA recommends that FRA and CHSRA use Caltrans recently published cumulative impacts guidance, which is applicable to cumulative impact analyses for non-road projects. This guidance can be found at [http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/cumulative_guidance/purpose.htm].

Growth Inducing Analysis

EPA recommends making both the methodology and the assumptions in the growth inducing analysis as transparent as possible to the public and decision makers.

Recommendations:

EPA provides the following recommendation for incorporation into the Draft EIS:

- Identify which land use model will be used, discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and describe why it was selected.
- Identify the assumptions used in the model, the strengths and weaknesses of the assumptions, and why those assumptions were selected. For example, describe which method will be used to allocate growth to analysis zones, its strengths and weaknesses, and why that method was selected.
- Ground truth the results of the land use model by enlisting local expertise involved in land use issues, such as local government officials, land use and transportation planners, home loan officers, and real estate representatives. Use their collective knowledge to validate or modify the results of the land use model.
- Use the results of the growth inducing analysis to inform station locations, and parking lot size and locations, as well as mitigation measures to reduce environmental impacts.
- Identify station locations that are currently zoned for high density development and those that are not. Address potential growth-related mitigation efforts, including incentives for transit-oriented development, measures to increase the capacity of city/county planning efforts, and mechanisms to encourage transit oriented development.
- Use FHWA and Caltrans recently published growth-related impacts guidance, which is applicable to growth-related impact analyses for non-road projects outside of California. This guidance can be found at [http://www.dot.ca.gov/ser/Growth-related_IndirectImpactAnalysis/gri_guidance.htm].

Rail Stations

The Draft EIS should identify where proposed stations, parking lots, and additional required infrastructure will be located in the project corridor, and should disclose the associated impacts from station development on planned and unplanned growth.

Recommendations:

EPA provides the following recommendation for incorporation into the Draft EIS:

- Identify the expected land use changes associated with station locations.
- Identify the associated environmental impacts of those land use changes, both indirect and cumulative.
- Identify parties responsible for mitigating the environmental impacts associated with the indirect and cumulative impacts of the projected land use changes.

Station Features

One of the greatest benefits of the project is to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). EPA strongly supports including project elements that will further reduce VMT.

Recommendations:

EPA provides the following recommendation for incorporation into the Draft EIS:

- Minimize the parking lots to the greatest extent possible at the stations.
- Coordinate with other transit providers to maximize station access by transit.
- Design the new facilities to be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, in addition to linking with other modes of transit.
- Support policies that will increase density and mixed-uses in the station areas.

Environmental Justice and Community Involvement

Executive Order 12898 addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low income populations, and the Council on Environmental Quality has developed guidance concerning how to address Environmental Justice in the environmental review process (http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ej/justice.pdf).

Recommendations:

- Identify how the proposed alternatives may affect the mobility of low-income or minority populations in the surrounding area.
- Provide specific, appropriate mitigation measures for any anticipated adverse impacts to community members.
- Include opportunities for incorporating public input to promote context sensitive design, especially in Environmental Justice communities.

[Federal Register: March 15, 2007 (Volume 72, Number 50)]
[Notices]
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From the Federal Register Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov]
[DOCID:fr15mr07-123]

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Environmental Impact Statement for the California High Speed Train System from Palmdale to Los Angeles, CA

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) .

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: FRA is issuing this notice to advise the public that FRA and the California High Speed Rail Authority (Authority) will jointly prepare a project level Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and project level Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the section of the Authority's proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) System from the City of Palmdale to the City of Los Angeles in compliance with relevant State and federal laws, in particular the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

FRA is issuing this notice to solicit public and agency input into the development of the scope of the EIS and to advise the public that outreach activities conducted by the Authority and its representatives will be considered in the preparation of the combined EIR/EIS. The Authority and FRA completed a Program EIR/EIS for the California HST System in 2005 as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed California HST System. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR and issued a decision, and FRA issued a Record of Decision in November 2005 on the Final Program EIS, selecting the HST Alternative for further project level environmental review and selecting corridor alignments and potential station locations, including a corridor between Palmdale and Los Angeles. The preparation of this project level Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will involve development of preliminary engineering designs and assessment of environmental effects associated with the construction, operation and

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maintenance of the HST system, including track, ancillary facilities and stations, along the previously selected Palmdale-Los Angeles corridor.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS should be provided to the Authority by April 24, 2007. Public scoping meetings are scheduled from April 4-17, 2007 as noted below.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope should be sent to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director, ATTN. Palmdale-Los Angeles, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L Street, Suite 1425, Sacramento CA 95814, or

via e-mail with subject line ``Palmdale-Los Angeles'' to: comments@hsr.ca.gov. Comments may also be provided orally or in writing

at scoping meetings scheduled at the following locations:

Glendale Public Library, 222 E. Harvard St., Glendale, CA 91205, on April 4, 2007 from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m.

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Agency Headquarters (Board Room), One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012, on April 5, 2007 from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m.

Sylmar Park Recreation Center, 13109 Borden Avenue Sylmar, CA 91342 on April 10, 2007, from 3 to 5:00 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Palmdale City Hall, Council Chambers, 38300 North Sierra Highway, Palmdale, CA 93550, on April 12, 2007 from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m.

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens (Atrium), 570 W. Avenue 26, Los Angeles, CA 90065, on April 17, 2007 from 3 to 5 p.m. and from 6 to 8 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. David Valenstein, Environmental Program Manager, Office of Railroad Development, Federal Railroad Administration, 1120 Vermont Avenue (Mail Stop 20), Washington, DC 20590; Telephone (202)-493-6368, or Mr. Leavitt at the above noted address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning for the development of a proposed statewide HST network that is fully coordinated with other public transportation services. The Legislature has granted the Authority the powers necessary to oversee the construction and operation of a statewide HST network once financing is secured. As part of the Authority's efforts to implement a high-speed train system, the Authority adopted a Final Business Plan in June 2000, which reviewed the economic feasibility of a 700-mile-long HST system capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour on a dedicated, fully grade-separated state-of-the-art track.

The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of railroad operations, including the safety of any proposed high-speed ground transportation system. For the proposed HST, it is anticipated that FRA would need to take certain regulatory actions prior to operation.

In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed a Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (statewide program EIR/EIS), as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR under CEQA and approved the proposed HST System, and FRA issued a Record of Decision under NEPA on the Final Program EIS. This statewide program EIR/EIS established the purpose and need for the HST system, analyzed a HST alternative, and compared it with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. In approving the statewide program EIR/EIS, the Authority and the FRA selected the HST Alternative and selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST system at the site-specific project level of environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.

The Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will be developed as a second-tier, site-specific environmental document. It is one of a number of second-tier environmental reviews for sections of the HST system that FRA and the Authority intend to undertake. It will be tiered from and

incorporate by reference the certified statewide program EIR/EIS in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.28) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. 15168[b]). Tiering will ensure that the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS builds upon all previous work prepared for and incorporated in the statewide program EIR/EIS. The EIR/EIS will be carried out in accordance with FRA's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts (64 FR 28545 [May 26, 1999]) and will address not only NEPA and CEQA but other applicable statutes, regulations and executive orders, including the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. This EIR/EIS process will also continue the NEPA/Clean Water Act Section 404 merger process established through the statewide program EIR/EIS process.

This Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS and other project level EIR/EISs will examine a range of project alternatives for portions of the proposed HST system within corridors selected in the statewide program EIR/EIS, as well as a no action alternative. This and other project level EIR/EISs will fully describe site-specific environmental impacts and will identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts and will incorporate design practices to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The FRA and the Authority will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of proposed site-specific projects to determine whether the impacts are potentially significant and whether impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This and other project EIR/EISs will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the HST system, and identify mitigation measures. Information and documents regarding the HST environmental review process will be made available through the Authority's Internet site: http://www.cahighspeedrail.gov/.

Purpose and Need: The need for a HST system is directly related to the expected growth in population and increase in intercity travel demand in California over the next twenty years and beyond. With growth in travel demand, there will be an increase in travel delays arising from the growing congestion on California's highways and at airports. In addition, there will be negative effects on the economy, quality of life, and air quality in and around California's metropolitan areas from a transportation system that will become less reliable as travel demand increases. The intercity highway system, commercial airports, and conventional passenger rail serving the intercity travel market are currently operating at or near capacity, and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion to meet existing demand and future growth. The purpose of the proposed HST system is to provide a new mode of high-speed intercity travel that would link the major metropolitan areas of the state; interface with international airports, mass transit, and highways; and provide added capacity to meet increases in intercity travel demand in California in a manner

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sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources.

Alternatives: The Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and HST Alternatives for the Palmdale to Los Angeles corridor.

No Action Alternative: The take no action (No Project or No Build) alternative is defined to serve as the baseline for assessment of the HST Alternative. The No Build Alternative represents the region's

transportation system (highway, air, and conventional rail) as it existed in 2006, and as it would exist after completion of programs or projects currently planned for funding and implementation by 2030. The No Build Alternative defines the existing and future intercity transportation system for the Palmdale to Los Angeles corridor based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system through 2030, according to the following sources of information: State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel, airport plans, and intercity passenger rail plans.

HST Alternative: The Authority proposes to construct, operate and maintain an electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system, over 700-mile long (1,126-kilometer long), capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour (mph) (320 kilometers per hour [km/h]) on dedicated, fully grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. The Palmdale to Los Angeles HST corridor that was selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS follows SR-58/Soledad Canyon from the City of Palmdale to Sylmar and then along the Metrolink Railroad line to Los Angeles Union Station. The corridor is relatively wide in the area that includes both the SR-14 and Union Pacific Railroad alignments between the Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita. Further engineering studies to be undertaken as a part of this EIR/EIS process will examine and refine alignments in the selected corridor, including sections from the Palmdale to Santa Clarita and from the Burbank Metrolink Station to Los Angeles Union Station. An alignment option that closely follows the SR-14 through Soledad Canyon will be considered as well as an alignment option through Soledad Canyon along the Santa Clara River. Alignments along San Fernando Road adjacent to Taylor Yard and along the existing Metrolink right-of-way around the Taylor Yard area will be considered.

Station location options were selected by the Authority and FRA with the statewide program EIR/EIS considering travel time, train speed, cost, local access times, potential connections with other modes of transportation, ridership potential and the distribution of population and major destinations along the route, and local planning constraints/conditions. Alternative station sites at the selected general station locations will be identified and evaluated in this project level EIR/EIS. Station area development policies to encourage transit-friendly development near and around HST stations that would have the potential to promote higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development around the stations will be prepared in coordination with local and regional planning agencies. Potential station locations to be evaluated in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS include: City of Palmdale, Palmdale Transportation Center; City of Sylmar, Sylmar Metrolink station; and City of Burbank, Burbank Metrolink station. The HST station at Los Angeles Union Station is being evaluated in the project level Los Angeles-Orange HST EIR/EIS and will not be considered in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS process. In addition, potential sites for turnback/layover train storage facilities and a main HST repair and heavy maintenance facility will be evaluated in the Palmdale-Los Angeles HST EIR/EIS.

Probable Effects: The purpose of the EIR/EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FRA and the Authority will continue the tiered evaluation of all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the HST system. Impact areas to be addressed include: transportation impacts; safety and security; land use, and zoning; secondary development; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological

resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration, energy, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

Scoping and Comments: FRA encourages broad participation in the EIS process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public at large to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. In particular, FRA is interested in determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant impacts identifiable at a project level. Public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise FRA and the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public agencies are requested to advise FRA if they anticipate taking a major action in connection with the proposed project and if they wish to cooperate in the preparation of the project level EIR/EIS. Public scoping meetings have been scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and Federal environmental review. The scoping meetings described in this Notice will also be advertised locally and included in additional public notification.

Issued in Washington, DC, on March 9, 2007.

Mark E. Yachmetz,

Associate Administrator for Railroad Development.

[FR Doc. E7-4711 Filed 3-14-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

April 12, 2007

Daniel Tempelis
Senior Project Manager, LA Area
5270 Carmento Drive
Oak Park, CA 91377
Tel: (818) 800-5688
daniel.tempelis@hatchmott.com

Re: Public Scoping Meetings on Proposed California High Speed Rail Service for Los Angeles

Dear Mr. Tempelis:

On behalf of the undersigned stakeholders, we are writing to request a public-friendly format for the April 17, 2007 scoping meetings at the Los Angeles River Center & Gardens. As you recall, in 2005, a coalition with longstanding involvement in LA River revitalization and local-park creation—Taylor Yard and the Cornfield site—worked to designate the area a *corridor for further study* in light of significant impacts to the our river and parks. Our interest has not waned, and with the scoping for service to and from Los Angeles just underway, we seek to work with the High Speed Rail Authority ("HSRA") to ensure proper alignment.

In this vein, we request that the scoping meetings be conducted in a manner that facilitates public participation and meaningful opportunity to comment. As it stands now, entirely too little information has been made available for us to comment on the scope of environmental review in anything other than gross generalities. The video presentation is a series of vague and venue-less statements about High Speed Rail generally, and the oral presentation that follows simply recites scoping legal requirements. We cannot speak to the scope of the project's environmental review when the project itself is not being presented to us. Therefore, we propose a public question-and-answer period following the HSRA's presentations so that commentators may inquire as to the nature of the proposed activity and meaningfully comment on it. In addition, Spanish translation must be provided. Lastly, the presentation must have specific information on where proposed and alternative alignments would potentially run in the identified corridor.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact Tim Grabiel at (310) 434-2300 or Joe Linton at (213) 977-1035 x125.

Very truly yours,

Tim Grabiel, Natural Resources Defense Council
James Rojas, Latino Urban Forum
Raul Macias, Anahuak Youth Sports Organization
Irma Muñoz, Alianza de los Pueblos del Río, Mujeres de la Tierra
Robert García, The City Project
Antonio Gonzales, William C. Velasquez Institute
Lewis MacAdams, Friends of the Los Angeles River